



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Heather Bond Somers and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, April 1, 2014

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Somers

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. NEW BUSINESS

2014-0008 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2014 Standing Referral)

Discussed

- FYE 2015 City of Groton Highway Budget

Town Manager Oefinger explained that there is a process outlined in state statutes that requires three members of the City Council and the Town Council to confer about how much money the City should be receiving for highway purposes. The discussion should have taken place back in October or November because the intent is for the group to meet before budget deliberations begin. Mayor Galbraith requested this meeting over a month ago in an attempt to enact the spirit of the statute.

Mayor Galbraith noted that she has been reviewing minutes starting in 1904. In the past, wardens of the borough met with the selectmen of the Town and came to an agreement on an amount to be included in the budget. The first mediation occurred in the 1940s. In recent years, the budget decision has been made by the Town Council with only an implied agreement from the City.

Mayor Galbraith noted that the City's highway budget was previously distributed to the Council. It represents a decrease from last year of approximately \$44,000. The City has submitted backup documentation by line item.

Councilor Frink questioned the number of FTEs in the Town compared to the City. Mayor Galbraith explained that the City has parts of people because they work in different areas during the day and their time is allocated.

Mayor Galbraith posed a number of questions about the Town's numbers. She asked which positions listed in the Town's budget are included in the highway budget. Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance noted that within the Public Works function there are Roads and Streets and Snow and Ice. There are 21 positions in Roads and Streets, but reductions were made as noted in the Town's submission of their highway numbers. Discussion followed on allocation of personnel including the Assistant Director of Public Works. Councilor Cerf requested a list of personnel with percentage of time spent on highway for the Town. Mayor Galbraith suggested that the Town allocations are suspect, noting she has not had an opportunity to drill down on the Town's

numbers.

Additional questions concerned what is included in vehicle maintenance fees. Discussion followed on allocation of overhead, i.e. how much of a building is used in support of the highway function, whether the Town is doing roads and streets or not.

Tim Umrysz, City Highway Foreman, also questioned the location in the highway budget of locker rooms, bathrooms, repairs and janitorial services.

Councilor Flax suggested that Mayor Galbraith was implying that the Town's number should be higher to substantiate the City's number. Mayor Galbraith stated she is looking for a true "apples to apples" comparison.

Councilor Cerf stated that the two groups need metrics and multiple discussions to arrive at a multi-year solution. She suggested taking an average for some budget entries that fluctuate and allocating costs to highway.

Councilor Moravsik suggested that Mr. Umrysz and Director of Public Works Gary Schneider meet to compare functions.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that there are three components to the City Highway Budget analysis: 1) What the City wants the Town to pay for; 2) What the Town's corresponding costs are; and 3) What the Town should be paying for.

Mayor Galbraith stated that the FYE 2015 budget request is what is needed to maintain roads and streets in the City. She reviewed the change from an engineer to a laborer position.

Discussion followed on metrics. Councilor Frink suggested a comparison of costs based on road mile or lane miles. Mr. Umrysz noted that all roads are different, with different requirements. Mayor Galbraith suggested that square feet would probably be more applicable, but there are also some fixed costs.

Mayor Galbraith noted that the Town and City can keep working on the numbers, but she is concerned with this year's budget.

Councilor Flax questioned how to reconcile things like pensions, benefits, and wages between the Town and the City. Also, there should be an agreement on how to deal with shortfalls and overages in the budget. Mayor Galbraith noted the City uses a capital account for highway, which is where excess funds go.

Mr. Pandolfo noted that in 2013 and 2014 revenues exceeded expenditures for the City Highway budget, and he questioned the balance of the capital account. Councilor Cerf stated it would be nice to see a financing plan for the City budget requests that would show the account balance from the previous year. Councilor Watson asked for the capital account information from the last couple of years.

Mayor Galbraith explained how the mediation award affected the budget request and calculations from FYE 2014 to FYE 2015.

Mayor Galbraith asked how the Council will decide what this year's budget should be. The Town Manager stated the Town will answer Mayor Galbraith's questions for budget deliberations.

Councilor Flax noted that even after mediation there are still areas where the two sides need to reach agreement. Mayor Schmidt explained that the method used to reduce the City's highway

budget in FYE 2014 was the only issue and nothing else was resolved. Mayor Galbraith stated that there is not enough time to address other issues before in the next two weeks and she is concerned that the Council is setting up a situation that will lead to mediation again.

Mayor Schmidt thanked the City Council for attending the meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.